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[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** All right, folks, thanks so much for being here today. It's been quite the whirlwind over the past couple of weeks, and I appreciate all the work that you're doing to help keep the public informed. I'm aware, certainly, especially this weekend, based on last night's during Finance Committee meeting, that you are sacrificing your own personal lives with your family and friends in order to be here. So thank you for your work. I am see Senator Mel Sager, the Democratic leader of the caucus here. And it is no secret that Republicans here in the Capitol building are in complete and utter disarray. Last night, it was reported that Republicans didn't have the votes from their own caucus to pass this bill that they've negotiated. Today, we're hearing maybe that's different. Yesterday, we didn't receive the floor calendar until nearly 5:00, less than 24 hours before we're supposed to be appearing on the floor and let me know that the calendar came out without the long awaited shared revenue amendment for a compromise that was announced last week by Republican leadership. And as of right now, we're still waiting for it. Increasing shared revenue is not controversial. It's something that communities throughout the state of Wisconsin, rural, urban, suburban, Republican and Democrat, have been pleading for, quite frankly, for years. This could have been a clean bill. It could have been passed with broad bipartisan consensus. And instead, Republicans, to my understanding, are still in fighting because they've decided to insert bad policy and unpopular ideas into this vital, vitally important piece of legislation for all of us to ensure that our communities are safe, secure and prosperous in the state of Wisconsin. Frankly, they should be ashamed of themselves. Wisconsinites deserve more than petty games that the Republicans clearly have been playing with the lives of our friends and neighbors. Let me be clear. For more than a decade, Democrats have been strong proponents of shared revenue increases across the state of Wisconsin. During the campaign, Governor Evers elevated this issue of shared revenue to a statewide audience. He echoed the voices of local government officials across the state of Wisconsin and communities who have been frankly starved for the resources that they need to provide basic services in our communities. For years, Democrats have highlighted the need for these resources to support everything from public safety to making sure that our streets are plowed after a snowstorm and our trash is picked up thanks to the paradigm shift during governors campaign. The conversation shifted the session, and my Republican colleagues, after a decade of inaction, are now saying, we want to help. But are they? Frankly, we welcome them to this conversation, but we're still waiting. While their decade long complacency has set Wisconsin back. I'm glad that they have finally realized the magnitude of the problems that have been caused after all of these years. I'm going to turn the podium over to Senator Spicer to speak a bit about the overall impacts of this proposal.

[00:02:58] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Senator Agard. I'm Senator Mark Spicer, and I'm the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection, where we've been working on the shared revenue bill. And I just want to again highlight that despite the public announcements of a deal that we're expecting to take up in less than an hour, we still do not have the text of that deal in front of us in the form of an amendment. And so we are still, unfortunately, talking about something that we we hope our Republican colleagues will bring to the floor and keep their end of the bargain. But we're still waiting to see, quite frankly. But Senate Democrats have been at the table the entire time pushing to make this bill and this deal better for everyone. And we're still here. And we wouldn't be where we are right now without the leadership of Governor Evers, without the leadership of Democrats in the legislature and without leaders in our local communities coming together, towns, villages, cities, counties, working together to speak with one voice and say we need more funding for our local communities to meet the most basic needs police, fire, parks, libraries, streets, the things that we all depend on. There's a lot of good in this bill. Assuming that the deal that that we've all been talking about actually comes forward today. There's a lot of good in that deal. There's also a lot of bad and ugly provisions that Republicans insisted on inserting as a condition of funding local government. In terms of the positive, this shared revenue increase is essential. Our biggest cities and our smallest towns are all facing fiscal cliffs. It may be Milwaukee that's facing it first, but a lot of our communities are not far behind. If we don't do something and it has been far too long where there have been both actual cuts and then flat funding, that amounts to a cut. When you factor in the cost of inflation, communities have cut police, they've cut fire, they've cut other staff positions, they've closed resources. I've seen it myself back when I served on the City council, and it's been because Republicans have made cuts or offered flat funding here in the legislature, and towns have historically been excluded from most shared revenue. This bill actually provides a meaningful amount of funding to our rural towns that are facing challenges with providing fire and EMS service in so many of our communities. So that is absolutely essential and that is a really good part of this. And this bill doesn't just include shared revenue. It's got the personal property tax repeal. That's something that I've been hearing about since the day I got to the legislature over eight years ago. And we came so close last session to finally repealing it. But Republicans would not cut a deal. They would not work with us to get language that would actually work. And thank goodness they finally did that this session. And a repeal of the personal property tax is in this bill, and that is incredibly important to our small business owners, but it's also important to our local communities that frankly don't want the paperwork of having to collect that tax. And this bill saves the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County. We cannot let our largest city and county fail. And the details of what they have to live with in order to get the sales tax increase in this bill are shameful. Republicans should be ashamed of what they are making. Our largest city and our largest county agree to to not go off a fiscal cliff. Nevertheless, this bill will keep them from going off that fiscal cliff and we have no other choice but to get that done. But this bill needs to do more. It fails to achieve the promise of actually giving 20% or $0.01 of our state sales tax collections to our local communities. The bill we're expecting to take up today would leave 25.6 million unspent in the local government fund money that should be going to local government and the shared revenue formula, even the one with the 20% minimum increase that's in this deal is still structured. Believe some cities behind cities like Janesville that I represent or Eau Claire or Waukesha, and we could solve that problem for an additional $10 million. But apparently Speaker Vos just won't. So Democrats will introduce an amendment on the floor today to add that additional funding to make sure we don't leave communities behind and to make sure we meet the promise of actually giving 20% of our sales tax to local governments. Without that, this bill will still fall short of being the truly generational transformative change that our communities need. It's gotten closer because of the work of Senate Democrats, Governor Evers and our local community leaders, But it's not there yet. And we will keep fighting on the floor today and in the next state budget and in every state budget after that to truly invest in and empower our local communities. And speaking of empowering our local communities, I'll turn it back over to Senator Iger to discuss some of the harmful policies that disempower local communities that Republicans have included in this bill.

[00:07:34] **Speaker 1** Thank you, Senator Sweitzer. Yes. The shared revenue increase is a win fight. It must be noted that Republicans came to the negotiating table with the intent to divide. Coupling bad policy with funding increases for our local communities. This isn't the Wisconsin way. This is the Republican playbook. Unfortunately, however, we've seen it in Washington, D.C., with the debt ceiling negotiations, and we're seeing it right here in the state of Wisconsin. Division rather than consensus. Partizanship prioritized over a clean bill. And make no mistake, we could have had a clean bill and we'll be talking about that on the floor today. Instead, Republican leadership has focused on extracting maximum concessions that, quite frankly, have nothing to do with shared revenue and allow them to score their political points. Let me be very clear. The policies put forward in the shared revenue package are woefully unpopular. From inhibiting local control with police and fire commission changes and anti inclusive permit provisions to their prohibition of advisory referendums and requirements for police officers in schools, Republicans are unfortunately holding vital funds hostage in exchange for the acceptance of bad and unpopular policies. It's disappointing, but not surprising that Republicans have included an extreme wish list and what they could have been a day to celebrate here in the Capitol building, investing in our communities in a strong, bipartisan way. My Democratic colleagues and I know that this is not the final solution, but rather a starting point. We must continue to pursue legislation that empowers our local governments to create communities where all Wisconsinites want to live, work and raise their families. A place where we're keeping our young children, our young adults, as well as recruiting young adults to put their roots down in the state of Wisconsin. Now I'm going to turn it over to my Senate Senate colleague Chris Larson, to speak about the ugly S.B. 330 and anti-public education bill put forward by our Republican colleagues.

[00:09:39] **Speaker 3** Thank you, Senator Edwards. Thank you all for for being here and shining a spotlight on what's happening here in our Capitol in the waning days of June. Chris Larson, state senator representing the seventh Senate District, Milwaukee south suburbs. And I have the privilege of serving as the ranking member on the Senate Education Committee. But most importantly, I'm also a proud public school, parents of a second grader and a fifth grader who attends Fernwood Montessori, which is still in session. Like a lot of schools are still in session, which means that some of the most ardent public school supporters only had less than a week to be able to respond in the middle of a of the school year. At the end of the school year, to try and get to the Capitol to let their voice be heard on what has become probably one of the worst public education bills we've seen moving through here. I think it's worth highlighting, as my colleagues have before me, that we have a $7 billion surplus. Wisconsin is flush with cash that we can invest to make sure that those priorities that were pushed, by the way, aside by politicians who said if only we had the cash, we would invest in public schools for the last decade plus, we have had those politicians standing on the cape of our young people as they're trying to take off and start their lives. And here we are today still with $7 billion of a surplus. And not only are they continuing to stand on that cape, but to pull it lower to the ground, keeping the next generation from actually achieving all that they could. This hurts them. This hurts the next generation of Wisconsinites. And again, this is at an it's at the behest of special interest groups who are pushing for unaccountable vouchers to see the largest increase in 30 years. Public school advocates at the beginning of the budget process were asking for 1500 dollars per pupil over the cycle just to maintain where they were pre-pandemic, to make sure that their schools were funded at the same levels that teachers could expect. Raises that that the students that expect the same teachers to be there would be there the next year, unfortunately. And the end of this, that total falls over $600 short of just maintaining the equal level that it was before the pandemic. We are shortchanging the next generation. And this bill, SB 330, is the largest expansion of public funding for private schools in 30 years. The I think the biggest punch in the gut is in terms of how much special education funding will be given to public schools at the end of this, which is 33% versus private vouchers. If they can prove that they are delivering the services which they are not required to do, they get a 90% reimbursement. It shows a clear contrast in priorities. The increase in funding for unaccountable private schools is even greater than those amounts listed and that you and your organizations have been pointing out. In fact, in some of them, the increase doesn't just go up. In some cases where it was reported as being 10% in the terms of high school, it will actually go up to 41%. In many cases, the voucher reimbursement at the end of the two year budget cycle will be greater, will be greater than what the public schools in the same neighborhood are getting. That I think is worth reporting, because for the longest time there has been a moving target in terms of what voucher schools are supposed to supply. The competition, we were told, was supposed to increase the benefits for all public schools. That promise was broken and changed to. We are going to be able to do this because they're more more fluid. That changed to now they are saying that they are cheaper at the end of this budget cycle. That will no longer be the case. Voucher schools will in many cases be getting more money than our public schools. This if this bill moves forward, this will be the beginning of the end for a lot of rural schools across the state, which will find it to be a huge struggle to maintain their student populations with competition of private schools down the road, getting preferential treatment in terms of dollars and not having to have teachers who actually have a teaching degree or a specialty in what they are teaching, much less having the ability to expel students that they find harder to teach. Our state constitution guarantees a public education for all Wisconsinites ages 4 to 20. What Republicans are proposing breaks that promise in favor of filling the coffers of private, mostly religious institutions who have the legal ability to discriminate against kids who are LGBT or have disabilities. With a $7 billion surplus. We can and must do better by all of our kids. Thank you. With that, I turn it back over to our leader, Senator Lugar.

[00:14:50] **Speaker 1** Thank you, Senator Larson. So there you have it. The good, the bad and the ugly. We're still waiting for probably the biggest piece of legislation that we're going to be taking up today to come before us so that we can dissect it and look forward to being able to go to the floor today and do the good work for the people of the state of Wisconsin. We very much believe that they are our bosses. They elected us to bring their voices into the Capitol building, and we hear them loud and clear. We're open for.

[00:15:20] **Speaker 4** Questions of the governor negotiating party for happens. Are you saying the Democrats in this deal?

[00:15:31] **Speaker 1** I, I don't I was not in the room. I'm sorry. Do you plan on voting and voting for him? I need to see the final the final piece of legislation. And Republicans ask for your votes. No.

[00:15:46] **Speaker 4** The governor has touted this as a green ad that he supports and cited as a process.

[00:15:54] **Speaker 1** We need to see the final piece of legislation that comes by education bills. I think I think that's what he was asking about.

[00:16:02] **Speaker 2** How long do you need once you've seen it?

[00:16:04] **Speaker 1** It depends on how quickly we can get the draft of attorneys and fiscal bureau over to brief us on the policy. We're not sure of the extent of the changes.

[00:16:15] **Speaker 4** Any of the other senators are prepared to sort out any final decision.

[00:16:20] **Speaker 1** That was on the details with all legislation, and we haven't seen the final legislation yet. If I'm speaking online or own my colleagues, but that's where we stand as a caucus, as my understanding.

[00:16:32] **Speaker 3** Senator Larson, some of the bottom line fears expressed some consternation this some during some of effort that, I mean, look, each each senator is going to have to figure out how they want to vote on the maps of all of these different components that are through it. I've heard from my neighbors on this, and they are extremely frustrated with with with what in some cases just seems like purposeful culture wars of just going after Milwaukee for the sake of going after Milwaukee. We are the engine of economic development that funds a lot of the states. More funds come from Milwaukee that go to the rest of the state than actually come to Milwaukee. And I think there is a in what seems like a growing frustration with how they've they've basically dragged our mayor and dragged our county executive into giving them just about anything so that they can maintain and have a budget that functions. And we don't shut down. I mean, asking for everything but demanding piggy back rides on demand from both of them.

[00:17:41] **Speaker 1** Thank you, everyone. It's going to be a spicy day.